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XIV.—*On the Indians of South America.* By Sir WOODBINE PARISH, K.C.H., F.R.S., &c.

[*Read May 9th, 1865.*]

D'ORBIGNY supposes the number of Indians now existing in that vast extent of country from the confines of Bolivia to the southern extremity of Patagonia not to exceed 32,000, of which he calculates the Tehuelches or Patagones to consist of 10,000; the Puelches of the Pampas, 600; the tribes between the Ventana and Rio Negro, 1,500; the Charruas of the Banda Oriental (now extinct), Tobas, Abipones, Lenguas, Matagayos, Guaycurus, and Payaguas, in the Gran Chaco, 6,000; but these are much lower numbers than are generally given to these Indians by the best informed people at Buenos Ayres.

Azara, who gives a very full account of all these tribes, says he could count thirty-two languages amongst them.

And this is nothing, if we adopt the lists given by the Jesuits of the various peoples amongst whom they established their missions; most of them, however, small and insignificant tribes, whose names, in enumerating their own labours, they have left us, which modern writers and map-makers, knowing little else of those countries, have in many cases adopted and put down as those of distinct *nations*, rather than migratory groups—as most of them really were—separated from their parent stock by the necessity of seeking their means of subsistence in new lands.

May they not be generally classified under a very few heads or original stocks? as for example:—

1. The Araucanian and Pampas Indians, on the eastern side of the Andes, scattered over Patagonia—nomade tribes, but stopped from proceeding northward by heat of climate and rivers.

They had no canoes, and subsisted by hunting wild animals, which they killed with their bolas and lances, and made cloaks of their skins.

2. The Tupis and Guaranis of Brazil and Paraguay—a docile people, cultivating the fruits of intertropical climes, such as the cassava or mandioc root, maize, etc.

They were fishermen, and had canoes, in which they were carried by the rivers flowing northward to great distances. They grew cotton, and made clothing of it.

3. The Peruvians, the Aymaras, and Quichuas, more or less in an advanced state of civilisation.

They had llamas as beasts of burthen, and the wool of the alpacca and vicunas to clothe them, and had established a system of government, under the Incas, far superior to any other found in America by the first European discoverers.

In the primitive state of the aboriginal inhabitants of these countries, without horses, or any facilities for emigration from their own lands, except the rivers, climate and the natural products of their soil may have very mainly influenced the range of their settlements and extent of their migrations beyond them. Thus, the Guaranis, who were habituated to subsist principally on the mandioc or cassava root and maize and mati, which they cultivated in the intertropical plains of Brazil and Paraguay, would be arrested in any extension of their settlements southward by a difference of climate, in which those plants would cease to flourish (the cassava is not found below 29 deg.). The same cause would not stop their migration to the north, which would have been facilitated by the many great rivers running in that direction towards the Amazons, on the shores of which their language is found.

On the contrary, the more hardy and warlike Araucanian tribes, nurtured in the colder regions of the Andes, without fixed habitations—a race of hunters, subsisting on the wild animals they caught with their slings and bolas in the deserts and plains of Patagonia, without canoes or the means of passing the great rivers which run across the continent—had little inducement and no facilities for entering the enervating climes further north, where to obtain their daily food it was necessary to till the earth,—an office which they looked upon as degrading, and only fit for the more docile and feeble inhabitants of those latitudes.

The Fuegians originally, perhaps accidentally, separated from the same stock, cut off by their insular position from the rest of mankind, and with the most scanty means of subsistence, seem, of all these people, to have lapsed into the lowest state of misery and barbarism.

The rivers carried the Guaranis everywhere northward as far as the Amazons, and beyond it. In the migrations and dispersion of their race along the shores of the great rivers, they were brought in contact with the Peruvians, from whom they probably first learnt the art of war in self-defence, which in later times made some of them formidable opponents to their Spanish conquerors. Such were the Payaguas who killed Ayalas and his party on the shores of the Gran Chaco.

It does not appear to me to be proved that any of these nations were worshippers of idols or carved images; they had an undefined idea of a future state, and of the power and influence of a Great Good and Evil Spirit. They prayed to the latter not to do

them harm. The other, if worshipped at all, was so by implication through the sun and moon, as they exercised their planetary influence over the established order of nature, and of all they saw daily and nightly around them.

It is difficult, after the lapse of more than three centuries, to account for the dispersion of these races, which (except in the case of Peru) possessed no historical records, and whose imperfect traditions as to their own origin were little cared for by their conquerors before they were irretrievably lost; whilst, on the other hand, they have been superseded by the teaching of Christian missionaries who from time to time have been among them, and who, in their zeal to impress upon them the Bible history as that of all mankind, have left them some confused notions of our first parents, of a deluge, and of the repeopling of the whole earth, which, though noticed by more recent travellers and writers as being found amongst them, had, I believe, no existence whatever in the minds of those races before the discovery of their country by the Spaniards.